

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

A. Risk and Protective Factor Definitions

The following risk and protective factors have been identified through research reviewed by the Social Development Research Group (SDRG), University of Washington, Seattle:

Community Climate – Risk Factors

Laws and Norms Favorable to Drugs

Definition: The degree to which respondents think youth in their neighborhood would be caught by the police if they smoked marijuana, drank alcohol, or carried a handgun and the extent to which they feel parents in the neighborhood would think it's wrong to smoke cigarettes or marijuana or to drink alcohol.

Questions: Q93: *If a kid smoked marijuana in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?*
Q95: *If a kid drank some beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) in your neighborhood, would he or she be caught by the police?*
Q96: *If a kid carried a handgun without permission in your neighborhood would he or she be caught by the police?*
Q102a-c: *How wrong would most adults (over 21) in your neighborhood think it is for kids your age: to use marijuana? to drink alcohol? to smoke cigarettes?*

Reasoning: Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.

Perceived Availability of Drugs

Definition: The degree to which respondents think it is easy for youths to get alcohol, cigarettes, and illicit drugs.

Questions: Q87: *If you wanted to get some beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin), how easy would it be for you to get some?*
Q88: *If you wanted to get some cigarettes, how easy would it be for you to get some?*
Q94: *If you wanted to get a drug like cocaine, LSD, or amphetamines, how easy would it be for you to get some?*
Q98: *If you wanted to get some marijuana, how easy would it be for you to get some?*

Reasoning: The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to use of these substances by adolescents. Availability of handguns is also related to a higher risk of crime and substance use by adolescents.

Perceived Availability of Handguns

Definition: The degree to which respondents think it is easy for youths to get handguns.

Questions: Q97: *If you wanted to get a handgun without permission, how easy would it be for you to get one?*

Reasoning: The availability of handguns is related to a higher risk of crime and substance use by adolescents.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Family Climate – Risk Factors

Poor Family Management

Definition: The extent to which respondents report that their parents would catch them if they drank liquor, carried a handgun, or skipped school, as well as the extent to which respondents report that there are clear family rules, that parents know the whereabouts of their children, that there are rules about alcohol and drug use, and that parents monitor homework completion.

Questions: Q116: *The rules in my family are clear.*
Q118: *When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and whom I am with.*
Q119: *If you drank some beer, wine or liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?*
Q120: *My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.*
Q121: *If you carried a handgun without your parents' permission, would you be caught by your parents?*
Q122: *If you skipped school, would you be caught by your parents?*
Q134: *My parents ask if I've gotten my homework done.*
Q135: *Would your parents know if you did not come home on time?*

Reasoning: Parents' use of inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment with their children places them at higher risk for substance use and other problem behaviors. Parents' failure to provide clear expectations and to monitor their children's behavior makes it more likely that they will engage in drug abuse whether or not there are family drug problems.

Family History of Antisocial Behavior

Definition: Respondents reporting whether they have siblings that drink, smoke marijuana, smoke cigarettes, have been expelled, or have taken a handgun to school; and the number of adults they know who have used and/or dealt drugs, gotten drunk or high, or have engaged in illegal activities.

Questions: Q103a-d: *About how many adults (over 21) have you known personally who in the past year have: used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs? sold or dealt drugs? done other things that could get them in trouble with the police like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging or assaulting others, etc.? gotten drunk or high?*
Q115a-e: *Have any of your brothers or sisters ever: drunk beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin)? smoked marijuana? smoked cigarettes? taken a handgun to school without permission? been suspended or expelled from school?*
Q117: *Has anyone in your family ever had a severe alcohol or drug problem?*

Reasoning: When children are raised in a family with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence and/or substance use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Parental Attitudes Favor Drug Use

Definition: The degree to which respondents report their parents would feel it is wrong if they (the respondents) drink liquor, smoke marijuana, or smoke cigarettes.

Questions: Q112a-c: *How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to: drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin) regularly? smoke cigarettes? smoke marijuana?*

Reasoning: In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence.

Parental Attitudes Favor Antisocial Behavior

Definition: The degree to which respondents report their parents would feel it is wrong if they (the respondents) steal, draw graffiti, or fight.

Questions: Q112d-f: *How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to: steal something worth more than \$5? draw graffiti, or write things or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)? pick a fight with someone?*

Reasoning: In families where parents are tolerant of antisocial behavior, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence.

School Climate – Risk Factors

Lower Academic Achievement

Definition: A respondent's grade-based performance.

Questions: Q8: *Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?*

Q18: *Are your school grades better than the grades of most students in your class?*

Reasoning: Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4-6), academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.

Low Commitment to School

Definition: The degree to which students find school and homework interesting and important.

Questions: Q9: *During the last four weeks how many whole days of school have you missed because you skipped or "cut"?*

Q20: *How often do you feel that the schoolwork you are assigned is meaningful and important?*

Q21: *How interesting are most of your courses to you?*

Q22: *How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?*

Q23a-c: *Now thinking over the past year in school, how often did you: enjoy being in school? hate being in school? try to do your best work in school?*

Reasoning: Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, sedatives, or non-medically prescribed tranquilizers is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug use.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Peer-Individual Climate – Risk Factors

Rebelliousness

Definition: The extent to which respondents report disregarding rules.

Questions: Q30: *I ignore rules that get in my way.*
Q33: *I do the opposite of what people tell me, just to get them mad.*
Q47: *I like to see how much I can get away with.*

Reasoning: Young people who do not feel part of society, are not bound by rules, don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society, are at higher risk of abusing drugs. In addition, high tolerance for deviance, a strong need for independence, and normlessness have all been linked with drug use.

Early Initiation of Drug Use

Definition: The age at which respondents first try a variety of negative behaviors, including smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol, etc.

Questions: Q28a-d: *How old were you when you first: smoked marijuana? smoked a cigarette, even just a puff? had more than a sip or two of beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)? began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?*

Reasoning: Early onset of drug use predicts misuse of drugs. The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use prior to the age of 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of onset of drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement and a greater probability of discontinuation of use.

Attitudes Favorable to Antisocial Behavior

Definition: The extent to which respondents themselves feel that engaging in various anti-social behaviors for youths their age is appropriate.

Questions: Q29a-e: *How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: take a handgun to school without permission? steal anything worth more than \$5? pick a fight with someone? attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them? stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school?*

Reasoning: Young people who accept or condone antisocial behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors, including drug use.

Attitudes Favorable to Drug Use

Definition: The extent to which respondents themselves feel that drinking, smoking, or taking illicit drugs for youths their age is appropriate.

Questions: Q29f-i: *How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin) regularly? smoke cigarettes? smoke marijuana? use LSD, cocaine, amphetamines or another illegal drug?*

Reasoning: Initiation of use of any substance is preceded by values favorable to its use. During the elementary school years, most children express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes and have difficulty imagining why people use drugs. However, in middle school, as more youth are exposed to others who use drugs, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Youth who express positive attitudes toward drug use are at higher risk for subsequent drug use.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Perceived Risk of Drug Use.

- Definition: The extent to which respondents themselves feel that people risk harming themselves if they smoke cigarettes, drink or smoke marijuana.
- Questions: Q52a-d: *How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they: smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day? try marijuana once or twice? smoke marijuana regularly? take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, or hard liquor) nearly every day?*
- Reasoning: Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.

Interaction with Antisocial Peers

- Definition: The number of a respondent's friends who engage in anti-social activities.
- Questions: Q27h,j,k,m,n,o: *Think of your four best friends. How many in the past year have: been suspended from school? carried a handgun without permission? sold illegal drugs? stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle? been arrested? dropped out of school?*
- Reasoning: Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.

Peers' Drugs Use

- Definition: The number of a respondent's friends who take drugs, drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes.
- Questions: Q27 b, c, e, g: *Think of your four best friends. How many in the past year have: smoked cigarettes? tried beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey or gin) when their parents didn't know about it? used marijuana? used LSD, cocaine, amphetamines, or other illegal drugs?*
- Reasoning: Young people who associate with peers who engage in alcohol or substance abuse are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Even when young people come from well-managed families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who use drugs greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.

Sensation Seeking

- Definition: The extent to which respondents report that they do dangerous and crazy things.
- Questions: Q35a-c: *How many times have you done the following things: Done crazy things even if they are a little dangerous? Done something dangerous because someone dared you to do it? Done what feels good no matter what?*
- Reasoning: Young people who seek out opportunities for dangerous, risky behavior in general are at higher risk for participating in drug use and other problem behaviors.

Rewards for Antisocial Involvement

- Definition: The extent to which respondents feel they would be considered cool if they smoked cigarettes, drank, smoked marijuana, or carried a handgun.
- Questions: Q39 a, c, e, g: *What are the chances you would be seen as cool if you: smoked cigarettes? began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month? smoked marijuana? carried a handgun without permission?*
- Reasoning: Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Intention to Use Drugs

- Definition: The extent to which respondents indicated that they plan to use cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana as adults.
- Questions: Q104a-c: *Sometimes we don't know what we will do as adults, but we may have an idea. Please answer how true these statements may be for you. When I am an adult: I will smoke cigarettes. I will drink beer, wine, or liquor. I will smoke marijuana.*
- Reasoning: Intent to use cigarettes, alcohol, and/or marijuana as an adult is a strong predictor of future drug use and antisocial behaviors.

Community Climate – Protective Factors

Community Opportunities for Involvement

- Definition: Perceived opportunities to engage in pro-social activities in the community and to engage with adults.
- Questions: Q106: *There are lots of adults in my neighborhood I could talk to about something important.*
Q109a-e: *Which of the following activities for people your age are available in your community: sports teams? scouting? boys and girls clubs? 4-H clubs? service clubs?*
- Reasoning: When opportunities are available in a community for positive participation, children are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

Community Rewards for Involvement

- Definition: The degree to which respondents feel people in their neighborhood recognize, acknowledge, and support their positive behaviors.
- Questions: Q105: *My neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.*
Q108: *There are people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something well.*
Q111: *There are people in my neighborhood who encourage me to do my best.*
- Reasoning: Rewards for positive participation in activities helps children bond to the community, thus lowering their risk for substance use.

Family Climate – Protective Factors

Family Attachment

- Definition: The extent to which respondents feel close to and can share openly with their mother and father.
- Questions: Q124: *Do you feel very close to your mother?*
Q125: *Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?*
Q128: *Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father?*
Q132: *Do you feel very close to your father?*
- Reasoning: Young people who feel that they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

Family Opportunities for Pro-social Involvement

Definition: The extent to which respondents participate in family decision making, have opportunities to do fun things with their parents, and can share problems with their parents.

Questions: Q126: *My parents ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made.*

Q131: *If I had a personal problem, I could ask my mom or dad for help.*

Q133: *My parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them.*

Reasoning: Young people who are exposed to more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the responsibilities and activities of the family are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.

Family Rewards for Pro-social Involvement

Definition: The extent to which respondents report their parents acknowledging and praising them for good things they do, and that they enjoy spending time with their parents.

Questions: Q123: *My parents notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.*

Q127: *How often do your parents tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?*

Q129: *Do you enjoy spending time with your mother?*

Q130: *Do you enjoy spending time with your father?*

Reasoning: When parents, siblings, and other family members praise, encourage, and attend to things done well by their child, children are less likely to engage in substance use and problem behaviors.

School Climate – Protective Factors

School Opportunities for Pro-social Involvement

Definition: The degree to which respondents feel that they can interact with teachers and can participate in school-related activities.

Questions: Q10: *In my school, students have lots of chances to help decide things like class activities and rules.*

Q11: *Teachers ask me to work on special classroom projects.*

Q13: *There are lots of chances for students in my school to get involved in sports, clubs, and other school activities outside of class.*

Q14: *There are lots of chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one.*

Q19: *There are lots of chances to be part of class discussions or activities.*

Reasoning: When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in drug use problem behaviors.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

School Rewards for Pro-social Involvement

- Definition: The degree to which respondents feel acknowledged by teachers and their parents relative to their (the students) school involvement and performance.
- Questions: Q12: *My teacher(s) notices when I am doing a good job and lets me know about it.*
Q15: *I feel safe at my school.*
Q16: *The school lets my parents know when I have done something well.*
Q17: *My teachers praise me when I work hard in school.*
- Reasoning: When young people are recognized and rewarded for their contributions at school, they are less likely to be involved in substance use and other problem behaviors.

Peer-Individual Climate – Protective Factors

Social Skills

- Definition: Scenarios that require the respondent to make a decision about the best, or most pro-social option.
- Questions: Q40: *You're looking at CDs in a music store with a friend. You look up and see her slip a CD under her coat. She smiles and says "which one do you want? Go ahead, take it while nobody's around." There is nobody in sight, no employees and no other customers. What would you do now?*
Q41: *It's 8:00 on a weeknight and you are about to go over to a friend's home when your mother asks you where you are going. You say, "Oh, just going to go hang out with some friends." She says, "No, you'll just get into trouble if you go out. Stay home tonight." What would you do now?*
Q42: *You are visiting another part of town, and you don't know any of the people your age there. You are walking down the street, and some teenager you don't know is walking toward you. He is about your size, and as he is about to pass you, he deliberately bumps into you and you almost lose your balance. What would you say or do?*
Q43: *You are at a party at someone's house, and one of your friends offers you a drink containing alcohol. What would you say or do?*
- Reasoning: Young people who are socially competent and engage in positive interpersonal relations with their peers are less likely to use drugs and engage in other problem behaviors.

Belief in the Moral Order

- Definition: The degree to which respondents feel it is OK to fight, steal, cheat and be dishonest.
- Questions: Q31: *It is all right to beat up people if they start the fight.*
Q32: *It is important to be honest with your parents, even if they become upset or you get punished.*
Q34: *I think it is okay to take something without asking if you can get away with it.*
Q46: *I think sometimes it's okay to cheat at school.*
- Reasoning: Young people who have a belief in what is "right" or "wrong" are less likely to use drugs.

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

B. Risk and Protective Factor Scales and Cut-Points

The scales for the risk and protective factors were provided by the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group (SDRG). Risk and protective factor scales were constructed using Likert scaling practices. The response options of some items were recoded to provide a continuum from high to low appropriate for the scale. For risk scale items, a high value reflects an undesirable attitude or behavior. For protective scale items, a high value reflects a desirable attitude or behavior. For the scaled data, the cut point was determined by taking the median value (plus 0.15 times the standard deviation) for each scale for all the weighted 2000 data from all seven participating states in the Diffusion Project consortium. If the individual student's score was above the cut point, s/he was considered at risk (or protected).

By way of illustration, the risk factor in the school domain described as "Lower Academic Achievement" is based on the scores from two questions. One asks, "Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?" (Question 8). The responses are recoded so that the lowest grades have the highest values; for instance "F" is given the value of 4, "C" is 2.5, and "A" is 1. The second question is, "Are your grades better than the grades of most students in your class?" (Question 18), with the responses ranging from an emphatic "NO!" (4 points) to an emphatic "YES!" (1 point). A student has to answer both questions to get a score for this risk factor. The mean of the two responses is compared to the cut point calculated using the scores from all students in the seven states who answered the two questions. In this case, the cut point for 6th graders is 1.977. If a student scored higher than this, s/he was considered at risk for "Lower Academic Achievement".